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DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES
DIVISION OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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PRESS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

Notice Regarding Proper Procedure for Metallic Mercury Spills

Metallic mercury, the substance found in common household items, is a hazardous chemical that can cause serious health problems and environmental damage if not handled properly.

While there are no laws that prohibit the possession of metallic mercury, it is a very toxic substance and it is illegal to improperly release or dispose of it. Due to recent events involving metallic mercury contamination in a Douglas County school and a Clark County residence, many people have contacted the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) and other State and local agencies asking how to respond when metallic mercury spills as a result of using normal household items. The following household items may contain metallic mercury:

- Thermometers
- Thermostats
- Fluorescent Light Bulbs
- Some motion sensitive switches

For **larger spills** please call:

Emergency Response

911

NDEP Spill Hotline

1-888-331-NDEP (6337)

For **small household mercury spills** use the following procedures:

If you have items containing metallic mercury at your home, you should not be alarmed. Inhalation of vapors off the mercury is one of the primary concerns. The use of metallic mercury household items is common. If any of these items should break or fail, resulting in a release of metallic mercury, NDEP makes the following recommendations:

- Quickly close doors/windows leading to uncontaminated areas to isolate the spill. Open a window or door to ventilate the spill area to fresh outside air.
- Turn off forced air furnaces, ventilation systems and air conditioners to prevent mercury vapors from being transferred to other parts of the home
- **Never** use a vacuum or shop-vac (it releases vapors)
- **Never** use a broom (it scatters mercury beads)
- **Never** pour down a drain
- **Never** use household cleaning products to clean the spill (products containing ammonia or chlorine may react violently with mercury)
- Always wear protective disposable gloves when handling
- Use a flashlight to look for mercury in the area of the spill (the light will reflect)
- Use a rubber squeegee and dustpan, or stiff paper to pick-up the visible mercury beads and place them in a plastic zip-lock bag or air tight container.
- Remove and place any shoes or clothing items that may have come into contact with the mercury and place and seal in plastic bags for proper disposal .
- Keep collected mercury and contaminated articles in a cool location (garages, etc.) until disposal.
- **Do not** dispose of it into the trash.

“What do I do with it ?”

To dispose of mercury from household sources call:

NDEP Recycling Hotline 1-800-597-5865

Or, in Clark County

Clark County Health District (702) 383-1275

The NDEP will be working with other agencies and will sponsor a program to collect and safely dispose of metallic mercury that Nevadans have at their homes.

For further information, please contact the Nevada Division of Environmental Protection at (775) 687-9462, or visit our web page at <http://ndep.nv.gov/>.